

REMARKS

Claims 1-17 are pending. Claims 10-17 are newly presented. Reconsideration and allowance of the present application based on the following remarks are respectfully requested.

In the Specification

The specification was objected to for containing minor informalities. Applicants have amended the specification to correct the minor informalities identified by the Examiner on page 2 of the Office Action. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Karasawa (U.S. Patent No. 6,665,315) in view of Kasa et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2002/0085583), and claim 2 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Karasawa in view of Yuki et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,778,557). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections at least because Kasa is not valid prior art under section 35 U.S.C. § 102(e).

Specifically, the earliest possible 102(e) priority date for Kasa is February 1, 2002 which is after Applicants' U.S. filing date of May 10, 2001. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

New Claims and Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication that claims 3-9 contained allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the features of their base claim and any intervening claims. However, in view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the claims (claims 1-17) are in condition for allowance. Specifically, new claims 10-17 include, in part, the subject matter of original claim 3.

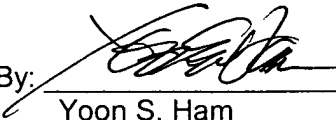
Conclusion

Therefore, all objections and rejections having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in a condition for allowance and a Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Should any issues remain unresolved, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned attorney for Applicants at the telephone number indicated below in order to expeditiously resolve any remaining issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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